



Women, Girls and Tobacco

For decades, the tobacco industry has targeted women and girls with its marketing and advertising, with disastrous consequences for women's health. As a result, 165,000 women die of tobacco-caused disease each year. Since 1987, lung cancer has been the leading cancer killer among women. Heart disease is the overall leading cause of death among women, and smoking accounts for one out of every five deaths from heart disease. For many of the diseases caused by smoking, research has shown that women are more at risk than men. And women also suffer gender-specific risks from tobacco, including harm to their reproductive health and complications during pregnancy.

Smoking among both men and women decreased gradually as the dangers of smoking became widely known. However, smoking rates have hardly declined at all in the last ten years; and women – who once smoked at half the rate of men – are now almost as likely to smoke as men. Recent increases in smoking by high school girls suggest that the problem may worsen. Gender differences in the cultural and social influences on smoking, consumption patterns, health effects, and responses to tobacco marketing and promotion require that tobacco use among women be considered separately from general discussions on the topic. Smoking by women is a serious, widespread public health problem that must be addressed.

- Twenty-two percent of American adult women are current smokers, compared to 26 percent of men. Caucasian and African American women smoke in roughly equal proportions (23% vs. 21%). American Indian women (38%) smoke at much higher rates, while much smaller proportions of Hispanic (13%) and Asian (10%) women smoke.
- Smoking prevalence is higher among women with 9-11 years of education (32.9%) than women with 13-15 years of education (22.8%) and three times higher than women with 16 or more years of education (11.2%)
- In 1997, smoking among female high school seniors reached a 19-year high of 35.2 percent, declining to 29.7 percent in 2000.
- A report published by the *American Journal of Public Health* shows that girls have an easier time buying cigarettes than boys, even at the youngest ages.

Smoking among girls and young women has increased dramatically in the 1990s. From 1991 to 1999, smoking among high school girls increased from 27 to 34.9 percent. Altogether in the United States, more than 22 million adult women and 1.5 million girls currently smoke, putting their health at significant risk.

Cardiovascular Disease: Cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks and strokes, is the overall leading cause of death among women, and smoking accounts for one of every five deaths from cardiovascular disease. Altogether, cardiovascular disease kills more than half a million women each year, more than the next 14 causes of death combined. Women who smoke are two to six times as likely to suffer a heart attack as non-smoking women, and women smokers have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease than men do.

Lung Cancer: Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer among women, and smoking causes 82% of all lung cancer cases among women. Lung cancer death rates among women increased by more than 400% between 1960 and 1990. By 1987, lung cancer had passed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. Women who smoke at the same rate as men are also at greater risk of developing lung cancer than men.

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Other Cancers: Smoking causes 30% of all cancer deaths. Smoking is a known cause of cancer of the lung, larynx, oral cavity and esophagus and has been associated with bladder, kidney, pancreatic and stomach cancer. Women smokers have an increased risk of cervical and vulvar cancer.

Reproductive Health: The reproductive side effects of smoking include menstrual problems, reduced fertility and premature menopause. Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke among pregnant women are a major cause of spontaneous abortions, stillbirths and sudden infant death syndrome and increase the risk of low birth weight babies and health and development problems of children born to these women. Nevertheless, an estimated 20% of pregnant women smoke.

Ultimately, women also have a more difficult time quitting smoking than men. They have lower cessation rates, and girls and women aged 12-24 are more likely to report being unable to cut down on smoking than men and boys the same age.

– Source: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Washington, DC

Missouri Women and Girl Smokers

Tobacco Use in Missouri

While adult smoking has generally been decreasing throughout the country in recent years, these declines have slowed or stopped. Although national underage smoking rates have finally declined slightly after peaking in 1997, they remain at historically high levels.

- High school students who smoke 32.8%
- Male high school students who use smokeless or spit tobacco 13.6%
- Number of kids (under 18) who become new daily smokers each year 18,200
- Kids exposed to secondhand smoke at home 352,000
- Percentage of cigarettes bought or smoked by kids in Missouri each year 27.2%

Deaths in Missouri from Smoking

Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined – and thousands more die from other tobacco-related causes – such as fires caused by smoking (more than 1,000 deaths/year nationwide), exposure to second hand smoke (more than 50,000 deaths), and smokeless tobacco use. Unfortunately, no good estimates are currently available for the number of Missouri citizens who die from these other tobacco-related causes, or for the much larger numbers who suffer from tobacco-related health problems each year without actually dying.

- Number of people who die each year in Missouri from smoking 9,900
- Number of Missouri kids now under 18 who will die from smoking (if current trends continue 121,000

Tobacco Related Monetary Costs

Additional health care expenditures caused by tobacco use include other costs from direct exposure to second hand smoke, smoking-caused fires, and spit tobacco use. Although these additional health expenditures certainly total in the tens of millions of dollars in Missouri, and increase the Missouri government's Medicaid burden, there are no good state estimates currently available. Other non-health costs caused by tobacco use include direct residential and commercial property losses from fires caused by smoking (more than \$500 million nationwide); work productivity losses from work absences, on-the-job performance declines, and early termination of employment caused by tobacco-caused health problems (\$40+ billion per year nationwide); by tobacco smoke, smokeless tobacco spit, and tobacco-related litter (about \$4+ billion per year nationwide for commercial establishments alone). No good state-specific estimates of these non-health costs from tobacco are available, but Missouri's pro-rata share, based on its population, is at least \$940 million per year.

- Annual health care expenditures in MO directly caused by tobacco use \$1.5 billion
- Residents' state and federal tax burden from government health costs caused by tobacco use \$893 million
- MO Medicaid Program payments directly caused by tobacco use \$206 million
- Additional annual expenditures in MO for the health problems of babies and infants caused by mothers smoking or being exposed to second hand smoke during pregnancy \$31 to \$90 million

– Source: Special Reports: State Tobacco Settlement, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Washington DC